



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
William A. Hinton State Laboratory Institute
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TO: Massachusetts District Attorneys

FROM: Julianne Nassif
Director, Division of Analytical Chemistry

DATE: May 4, 2009

RE: *Marijuana Seizures Submitted to the MDPH Laboratories Prior to January 2009*

cc: Geline Williams, MDAA; Wayne Sampson, MCOPA

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health Forensic Drug Laboratories in Boston and Amherst analyze drug seizures for many jurisdictions in the State. The demand for testing services currently exceeds the laboratories' analytical capacity, resulting in a significant sample backlog. The current turnaround time for evidence submitted today is 148 days.

The laboratory must implement some changes to more effectively use our existing resources. As such, the MDPH will no longer analyze simple marijuana possession evidence for cases submitted in 2008. The rationale for this decision is that many of these cases have likely been dismissed or resolved. This evidence will be returned to the submitting police departments with a certificate indicating that the sample was not tested. If there are 2008 marijuana cases that require analysis due to extenuating circumstances, please provide the laboratory number to Elisabeth O'Brien, the Boston Evidence Office Supervisor at elisabeth.obrien@state.ma.us or 617.983.6622. Marijuana cases involving intent to distribute or other specified charges will remain in queue for testing.

We expect the outcome of this decision to be beneficial in both reducing the backlog and positively affecting the sample turnaround, as chemist time will be focused on more recent and serious offenses. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this decision, please contact me directly at 617.983.6651 or julianne.nassif@state.ma.us.